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# Media and Information Literacy : a contribution from the A.P.D.E.N.

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Media and Information Literacy : a contribution from the A.P.D.E.N. to the work of the Evaluation and Control of Public Policies on citizenship training and to those of the Commission "Les Lumières à l'ère numérique" (The Enlightenment in the digital age). December 2021

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# 1. Elements for reflection

"Even more than moral and civic education, media and information literacy is the poor relation of the lessons that structure the student's civic pathway [...] this subject is little taught, which is paradoxical at a time when it is becoming more and more important due to the growing use of the media by young people" (La formation à la citoyenneté. Report by the French Court of Accounts, October 2021, p. 84). The A.P.D.E.N. can only subscribe to this statement and recalls the very heterogeneous nature of the Media and Information Literacy (MIL), both in terms of the content covered and the methods of implementation, with many disparities between schools depending on the priority, granted or not, to this topic, the priority given to this subject in the school's management, but also within the same school, depending on whether or not the students have come across, during their schooling, teachers who are aware of the challenges of the MIL.

Despite the introduction of related skills in most programs, implementation guidelines for cycles 2 and 3, a dedicated program or curriculum for cycle 4, chapters within the Digital Science and Technology (SNT [\[1\]](#)) program in the « Seconde », which is the 1st year of secondary school, the MIL undergoes the fate of all the "education for", often pushed to the periphery of disciplinary teaching. The increasing complexity of informational and media ecosystem, its constant evolution, and the highly sensitive nature of certain subjects, constitute a very unstable and insecure teaching ground to which very few teachers commit themselves. In this situation, a training system, however effective it may be, will not be able to completely correct continuing education and professional development activities in the field of MIL, usually bringing together colleagues who are already convinced and committed. It also seems important to us to accept the idea that certain particularly specialised skills are the responsibility of specialists in Information and Communication Sciences (ICS).

We can nevertheless reasonably assume that the construction of a MIL pathway can be based, in each school, on a team of a few teachers from different disciplines including of course, the teacher librarians. They are the only ones to hold a CAPES specialised in Information and Communication Sciences and to be very explicitly assigned to the field of MIL, as "teacher and project manager for the acquisition by all students of an information and media culture" (mission statement of 27th of march 2017), an expertise that has just been recognised by the Court of Accounts, which recommends "relying on the teacher librarian, the only teacher who has received specialised initial training" (op. cit. p. 85). According to their mission statement, teacher librarians must train all students in information and documentation literacy, a field that is largely part of the MIL, which inspires it in terms of issues and content. It is particularly this goal that the teacher librarians often do not have the means to carry out.

In the absence of a dedicated program (the 2015 « cycle 4 » program is limited to a reference framework of 27 skills), the profession has invested heavily in identifying the knowledge and skills related to the field of MIL and in their form of didactic preparation, with the aim of covering the various cultures involved : information culture, media culture, technical and digital culture in relation to the related societal and ethical issues. The A.P.D.E.N. has been playing a leadership role in this process for many years and is currently working on updating [an information literacy curriculum](#) from students aged 11 to 18, initially published in 2014, which defines, for each cycle and each level, learning objectives and the concepts associated that are within 4 fields :

- (1) Information and digital environments
- (2) Information and documentation processes
- (3) Critical distance on media, ICT and information
- (4) Legal and ethical responsibility related to information

This curriculum is supplemented by the collaborative [Wikinotions Info-doc](#) project, which brings together practitioners and researchers in the definition of essential concepts and the sharing of pedagogical methods related to these concepts.

In addition, a simple search of the indexed files with « MIL » on the French National Ministry of Education (MEN) platform for identifying pedagogical practices, *Edubases*, shows the very strong representation of teacher librarians in the production of these resources, but also their ability to design and conduct interdisciplinary sequences which most often favour an active pedagogy within a project-based dynamic. Nevertheless, we feel it is important to emphasise that these teaching methods, which aim to acquire knowledge through the students' practice, require appropriate resources, dedicated hours in the students' timetables, but also time for discussion between members of the teaching team.

In this context, teacher librarians can no longer continue to suffer, in the field, the obligation to constantly negotiate with their colleagues in other disciplines, but also with the school headmaster to position instructional sessions, knowing also that the collaborations established one year may be called into question the following year as a result of changes in the management team or the rotation of teaching teams. The first to suffer from this situation are of course students, but also an entire profession that has been waiting for many years for fair recognition of its investment.

Finally, although the profession has more or less succeeded in making up for the lack of programs and in identifying the teaching content in the field of MIL, the lack of a specific time frame in the students' schedule is a major problem. The situation has been complicated by the decline or even disappearance of the time dedicated to interdisciplinary devices, particularly at the French high school). Teacher librarians now teach fewer hours than they did five years ago, especially in high school, which goes against all logic. A dedicated time frame will make a significant contribution to the sustainability and generalisation of the MIL for an equitable and systematic training of all students, whatever difficulties schools may still encounter in building educational pathways. The citizen's pathway, of which the MIL is part, being one of its two pillars, as the Court of Accounts points out, can only be strengthened and consolidated.

The seven proposals below are the result of more than 30 years of work, reflection and experience, to find the means for this teaching.

## 2. Proposals :

1. Create an Media and Information Literacy curriculum from kindergarten to high school, made of skills and knowledge.
2. Define at each level, in lower secondary school (collège) and upper secondary school (lycée), MIL time modules in class timetables, weekly average of at least 0.5 hour, entrusted to interdisciplinary teams including the teacher librarian. In the class of « seconde », this module could be part of the SNT teaching, which transversal ambition should be urgently reaffirmed. At the other levels, in collège and lycée, the reintroduction of interdisciplinary devices in the timetable seems to us equally important.

3. Guarantee, in the service time of teacher librarians, a time frame dedicated to teaching, between 1/4 and 1/3 of the service time, in order to avoid that the student time frame, as proposed above, is not used to "fill in" the services of colleagues in other disciplines. This is already the case for the Civic and Moral Education (MCE), and if it were to be reproduced for the MIL, it could push teacher librarians out of the classroom (see the report of the French Court of Accounts). Correct, accordingly, the ambiguous wording in the 2017 mission statement on the missions of teacher librarians, which makes their teaching mission as optional, putting it in tension with the opening of the « CDI » [2] and subject to the arbitration of the headmaster.
  
4. Unambiguously apply the deduction of teaching hours provided for in the mission statement of 2017 and the decree on the « Obligations Réglementaires de Service » [3] of 2014, for all teaching hours carried out by teacher librarians, either alone or as a co-interventionist, including MIL hours.
  
5. Increase the number of positions for the CAPES with a number of posts per school taking into account the number of students with a minimum of one post per school.
  
6. Create an « agrégation » (higher teaching degree than CAPES) in order to give teacher librarians the same possibilities for career advancement and to allow the creation of a specific inspection.
  
7. Assign category B staff to the CDIs for operational routine in order to put an end to the tension that currently exists between the reception and the teaching missions.

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[1] In French, SNT is Sciences Numériques et Technologie.

[2] CDI, Centre de Documentation et d'Information, in english it can be translated by documentation and information center or school library.

[3] These « Obligations Réglementaires de services » are time services rules for French teacher librarians.